ELECTRONIC CASE FILING ECF



User's Manual

Western District of Oklahoma (Revised December 5, 2008)

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Electronic Case Filing System User's Manual

Getting Started

Introduction

This manual provides instructions on how to use the Electronic Case Filing (ECF) System to file documents with the Court, or to view and retrieve docket sheets and documents for all cases currently on the system.

Help Desk

Contact the Court's ECF Help Desk between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, if you need assistance using the ECF System.

ECF Help Desk: 1-405-609-5555 1-888-609-6593

E-mail: helpdesk@okwd.uscourts.gov

Go to the Court's website at www.okwd.uscourts.gov for information about ECF or to practice filing in our Training Database.

ECF System Capabilities

The ECF System allows registered participants with Internet access to perform the following functions:

- Electronically file pleadings and documents in cases that are currently on the system. (use your ECF Login and Password)
- View official docket sheets and documents associated with cases. (use your PACER Login and Password)
- View various reports for cases that are currently on the system.
 (use your PACER Login and Password)

Requirements

Hardware and Software Requirements

- personal computer running a standard platform such as Windows or Macintosh
- word processing program to create documents
- Internet Service Provider (ISP) to access ECF and email
- Internet browser (current versions of Internet Explorer and Firefox are fully supported)
- portable document format (PDF) reader software (such as Adobe Acrobat Reader)
- portable document format (PDF) writer (converter) software (for more information go to http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/documents/imagingWPprint.pdf)
- a scanner (OPTIONAL) for converting documents that are not available in electronic format

PACER Registration

ECF users must have a PACER account with the Court in order to use the Query and Report features of the ECF System. If you do not have a PACER login, contact the PACER Service Center at (800) 676-6856 for information or to register for an account. You may also register for PACER online at http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov.

Registering for Access to ECF

Participants will need to register with the Court to receive a login and password for the ECF System. Participants can go to our website at www.okwd.uscourts.gov and click on ECF Information to obtain information about the system, download the ECF Registration form, the Policies & Procedures Manual and the ECF Filing Menus.

Completed registration forms should be mailed to:

ECF Registration
Office of the Court Clerk
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma
200 N.W. 4th Street Room 1210
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Once an account has been established, your login and password will be sent to you by regular, first-class mail or the registrant may pick up the assigned User Login and Password at the Clerk's Office.

Preparation

Setting Up the Acrobat PDF Reader

Users must install PDF reader software in order to <u>view</u> documents that have been electronically filed on the system. All pleadings must be filed in PDF format.

*Note if you choose to use Adobe's Acrobat Reader software, it can be downloaded free at http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html

Portable Document Format (PDF)

Only PDF (Portable Document Format) documents may be filed with the Court using the ECF System. Before sending the file to the Court, users should preview the PDF formatted document to ensure that it appears in its entirety and in the proper format.

How to View a PDF File (using Adobe Acrobat)

- Start your Adobe Acrobat program.
- Go to the *File* menu and choose *Open*.
- Click on the location and file name of the document to be viewed.
- If the designated location is correct, and the file is in PDF format, Adobe Acrobat loads the file and displays it on the screen.
- If the displayed document is larger than the screen or consists of multiple pages, use the scroll bars to move through the document.
- Click on the *View* menu for other options for viewing the displayed document. Choose the option that is most appropriate for the document.

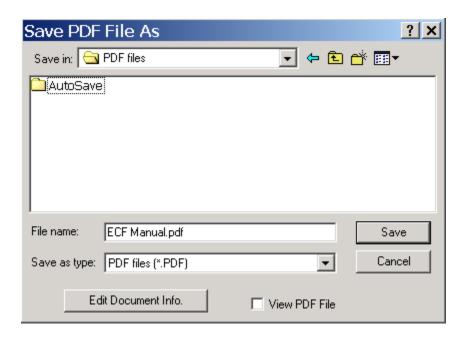
How to Convert Documents to PDF Format

You must convert all of your documents to PDF format before submitting them to the Court's Electronic Case Filing (ECF) System. The conversion process requires special software. For more information on PDF conversion go to http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov./documents/imagingWPprint.pdf

On the next page, there is an example of the conversion process utilizing Adobe Acrobat Writer as the conversion software.

Using any word processing program:

- Install Adobe Acrobat Writer on your computer.
- Open the document to be converted.
- Select the [**Print**] option (generally found in the File menu) and in the dialog box select the option to change the current printer. A drop down menu with a list of printer choices is displayed.
- Select Adobe PDF Writer or Distiller.
- "Print" the file. The file should not actually print out; instead the option to "Save PDF File As" should appear.



- Make a note of the 'Save in' location so you can find the document later when you are ready to file it. Change the location if necessary by clicking in the "Save in" area of the window.
- Name the file, save as type PDF and click the [Save] button.

Depending on the word processing program being used, it may be necessary to find the printer selection option elsewhere. At that point, change the printer to Adobe PDF Writer, and follow the directions above.

Basics

User Interactions

There are three general types of user interactions allowed by the system:

- Entering information in data fields
- Using command buttons to direct system activities
- Mouse-clicking on hyperlinks

Conventions Used in this Manual

- Data to be entered by the user is shown enclosed in angle brackets: <data to be entered>.
- Command buttons are represented in this manual in [bracketed boldface type].
- Hyperlinks are represented in <u>underlined boldface type</u>.

Documents Filed In Error

A document incorrectly filed in a case may result from 1) posting the wrong PDF file to a docket entry; 2) selecting the wrong document type from the menu; or 3) filing the document in the wrong case.

Please telephone:

ECF Help Desk 1-405-609-5555 1-888-609-6593

as soon as possible after an error is discovered. You will need to provide the case and document number for the document requiring correction. <u>Do not</u> re-file a document unless directed to do so by the Court.

Viewing Transaction Log

This feature, selected from the <u>Utilities</u> menu allows you to review all transactions ECF has processed with your login and password. If you believe or suspect someone is using your login and password without your permission, change your password immediately and notify the court of any incorrect filings.

User's Manual

You can download or view the most recent version of this User's Manual (in PDF format) from the District Court's web page at http://www.okwd.uscourts.gov. Click on **Electronic Case Filing (ECF)**, then click on **ECF User Manual**.

A Step-By-Step Guide

Below is a step-by-step guide for accessing the system, filing a document, and displaying a docket sheet.

How to Access the System

Users can get into the 'live' system via the Internet by going to

https://ecf.okwd.uscourts.gov

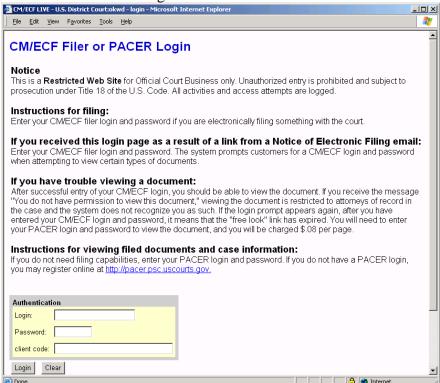
Or, from the Western District of Oklahoma's Website www.okwd.uscourts.gov click on Electronic Case Filing (ECF)

Click on **ECF Live**

Click on Western District of Oklahoma [Live] – Document Filing System

Logging In

The next screen is the login screen.



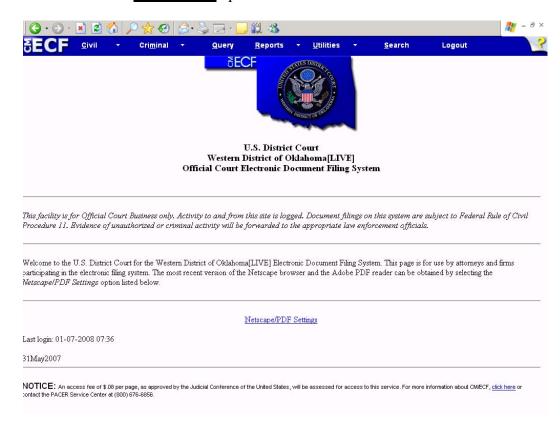
Enter your ECF Login and Password in the appropriate fields. All ECF login names and passwords are case sensitive.

Note: Use your **ECF** login and password if you are entering the system to file a pleading. Use your **PACER** login and password to query the database for case information or to view a document.

Verify that you have entered your ECF login and password correctly. If not, click on the [Clear] button to erase the Login and Password entries and re-enter the correct information. After you enter the correct login and password information, click on [Login].

- If the ECF System does not recognize your login and password, it will display the following error message on a new screen:
 - Your ECF or PACER login attempt failed. Either your login name or password is incorrect.
- Click on the [Back] button and re-enter your correct login and password.

Choose from the **hyperlinked** options on the blue menu bar.



Note: The date *you last logged into the system* appears at the bottom left corner of this screen. You should review this information each time you log in for security reasons. If you suspect an unauthorized person is using your login and password, please telephone the Court's ECF Help Desk at 1-405-609-5555 as soon as possible.

Selecting ECF Features

ECF provides the following features that are accessible from the blue menu bar at the top of the opening screen.

Civil Select **Civil** to electronically file all civil case pleadings.

<u>Criminal</u> Select Criminal to electronically file all criminal case pleadings.

Query ECF by specific case number, party name, or nature of suit to retrieve

documents from the ECF system. You must log into PACER before you can

query ECF.

Reports Choose **Reports** to retrieve docket sheets and cases-filed reports. You must

log into **PACER** before you can view some of these ECF reports.

<u>Utilities</u> Choose <u>Utilities</u> to view your personal ECF transaction log or to change your

ECF password.

Search Allows you to search for a specific menu item by entering a word or a string

of words.

Logout Allows you to exit from ECF and prevents further filing with your password

until the next time you log in.

Civil Events Feature

Registered participants will use either the Civil feature or the Criminal feature of ECF to electronically file pleadings. This section of the manual describes the basic steps that you need to take in order to file a motion in a civil case. The process is consistent with most document filings.

General Rules and Manipulations

Manipulating the screens

Each screen has the following two buttons:

- Clear clears all characters entered in the box(es) on that screen.
- Next or Submit accepts the entry just made and displays the next entry screen, if any.

Correcting a mistake

Use the **Back** button on your browser toolbar to go back and correct an entry made on a previous screen. Click on any hyperlink on the blue ECF menu bar and ECF will reset to the beginning of the filing process. Once the document is transmitted to the Court it is deemed filed. <u>Do not</u> re-file a document unless directed to do so by the Court.

Signatures; Affidavits of Service

Documents which must contain original signatures or which require either verification or an unsworn declaration under any rule or statute shall be filed electronically with original executed copies maintained by the filer. The pleadings or other documents electronically filed shall be signed in one of the following ways (1) with an original signature that is then scanned; (2) with an electronic signature; or (3) with "s/ (typed attorney name)."

In the case of a stipulation or other document to be signed by two or more persons, the following procedure should be used:

(a) **Approval for Electronic Signature:** The attorney whose User Login and Password is being used to file the pleading or other paper may obtain approval from any other attorney to state that the other attorney has authorized the filing attorney to electronically sign the document. Such approval shall be indicated as follows:

s/ Attorney's Name	<u>Filing Attorney's Signature</u>
(Signed by Filing Attorney with	
permission of Attorney)	

The filing attorney is responsible for maintaining a record of when and how permission was obtained to sign the other attorney's name until all appeals have been exhausted or the time of seeking appellate review has expired.

(b) **Approval by Signature:** The attorney whose User Login and Password is being used to file the pleading or other paper may obtain and maintain a paper copy of the document signed by the other attorney. Possession of a signed copy shall be indicated as follows:

s/ Attorney's Name Filing Attorney's Signature
(Signed copy of document bearing signature of Attorney is being maintained in the office of Filing Attorney)

The filing attorney shall maintain the signed copy of the document until all appeals have been exhausted or the time for seeking appellate review has expired.

(c) Anyone who disputes the authenticity of any signature must file an objection to the pleading or other paper within ten (10) days of service.

Filing a Civil Complaint

All Initiating Documents (i.e. complaints, notices of removal, applications to proceed *in forma pauperis*, miscellaneous proceedings, summonses, and civil cover sheets) shall be e-mailed as separate PDF files to the following e-mail address:

newcases@okwd.uscourts.gov

New civil cases will be deemed filed as of the date they are received into this mailbox provided all papers submitted for filing are received by 6:00 p.m., are in proper format, and arrangements for payment of the filing fee are promptly made. Payment of any fee required for filing a pleading or other paper is payable to the Clerk of Court by credit card, check, money order, or cash.

Filing Documents In a Civil Case

There are eight basic steps involved in filing a document in a civil case:

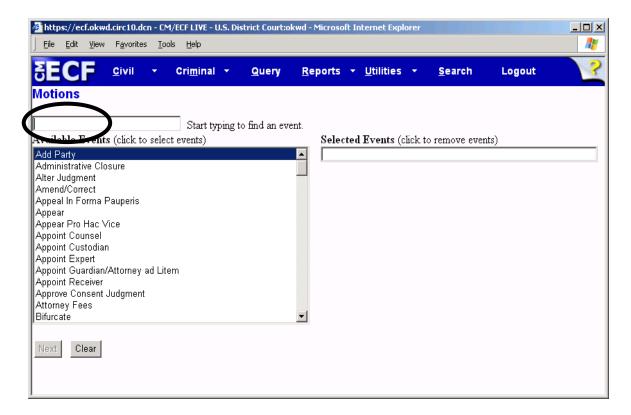
- 1) Select the type of document to file.
- 2) Enter the case number in which the document is to be filed.
- 3) Designate the party(ies) filing the document.
- 4) Attach the PDF file for the document being filed.
- 5) Add attachments, if any, to the document being filed.
- 6) Modify docket text as permitted / necessary.
- 7) File the pleading.
- 8) Receive Notification of Electronic Filing (NEF).



1. Select the type of document to file

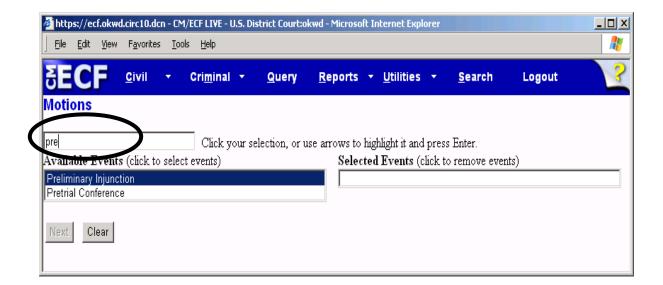
This section of the User's Manual describes the process for filing a **Motion** in a civil case. The process is similar for filing other pleadings in ECF. Select <u>Civil</u> from the blue menu bar and then <u>Motions</u>.

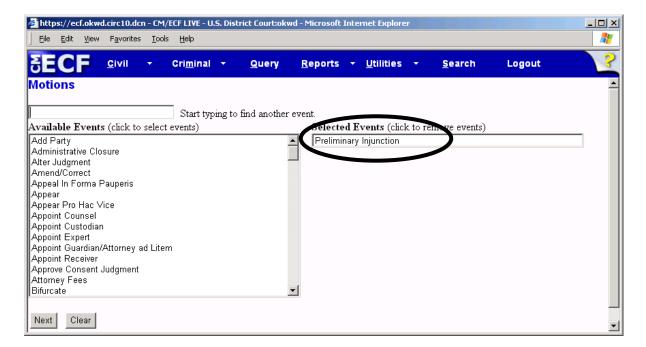
The **Motions** screen appears and displays a motion selection field with a scroll bar next to it. Either scroll down the list of choices or in the search box type all or part of a word from the name of the motion you are filing. The type of motion you select from this list should represent the document you are filing. Select all motion 'reliefs' from this list before you click on **[NEXT].**



For demonstration purposes, begin typing **Preliminary Injunction.** The menu items will be filtered to display those events that match the information that you type. Click on the menu choice to add it to the "Selected Events" list.

If you can't find the type of motion you are filing on this list use "Order" because this is the most generic relief. You will be presented with a text box at the end of this filing so that you can include additional wording to make the entry look as close as possible to the title of the motion that you are filing.



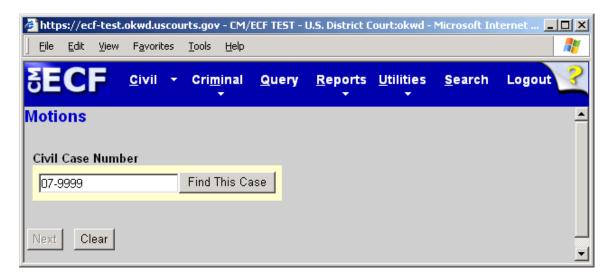


If you are asking for multiple "reliefs" in one motion select each "relief" from the "available Events" list.

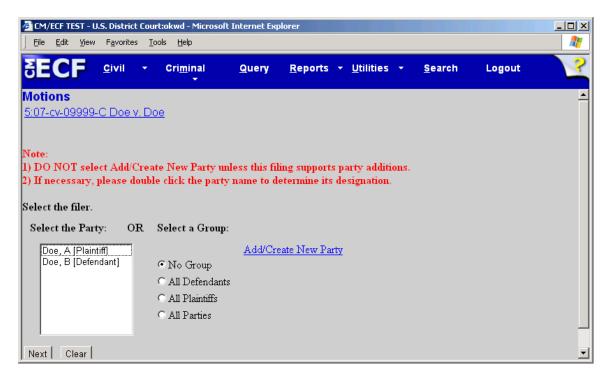
Always verify the contents of the "Selected Events" list before proceeding to the next screen. Everything you have added to this list will be included in your filing.

2. Enter the case number in which the document is to be filed

A new Motions screen opens with a Case Number field. Enter the case number in which you are filing the motion and click [Find this Case]. All possible case number matches will be displayed on the same screen as the initial look-up field. Once the case is found click [Next] to continue with the filing.



3. Designate the party(ies) filing the document



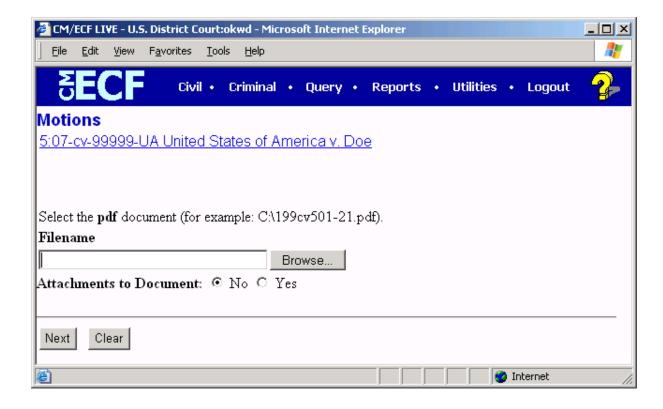
Highlight the name of the party(ies) for whom you are filing the motion. If you represent multiple defendants or plaintiffs select the appropriate parties by holding down the **Ctrl** key and mouse clicking on each party name. Click on the **[Next]** button to continue.

Note: If your party does not appear, see the section of this manual titled **Add/Create New Party**. If you click this you are adding a party to the case. The pleading you are filing should <u>support</u> the addition of the party(ies) to the case.

4. Specify the PDF file name and location for the document to be filed

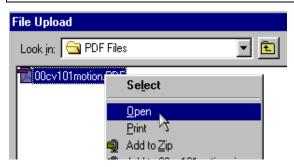
ECF displays the **Motions** screen shown below. On this screen, you will attach document that you are filing.

Note: All documents that you intend to file in ECF **MUST** be in **PDF** format and less than 5-megabytes in size. Documents that exceed the 5-megabyte file size limit will need to be divided into smaller files before the ECF System will accept them.

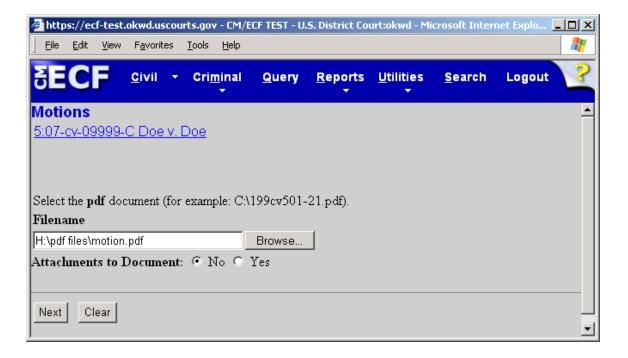


- Click on the [Browse] button.
- Navigate to the appropriate document you are filing.

Note: In order to verify that you have selected the correct document, right mouse click on the file name to open a 'quick menu' and left mouse click on [open]. This allows you to view the document to verify that you are attaching the correct document for filing.



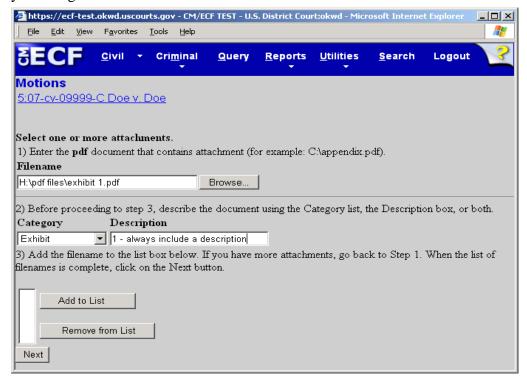
 Once you have verified the document is correct, close the PDF viewer and click on the [Open] button. ECF inserts the PDF file name and location into the Motions screen.



- If there are no attachments to the motion, click on [Next]. A new Motions window will open. Go to Section 6, "Modifying Docket Text," to proceed with your filing.
- If you have attachments to your motion, you will select **Yes** on the screen shown above then click on [Next] to attach the exhibits to your document.

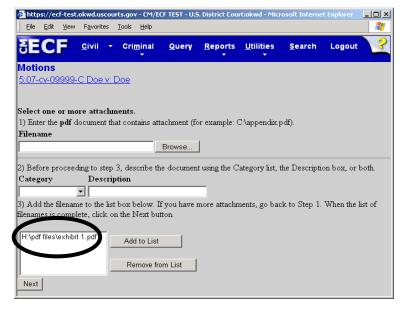
5. Add attachments/exhibits to documents being filed

If you have indicated that there are attachments / exhibits to the document you are filing, you will get the screen shown below.



- 1. Click on [Browse] to search for the document file name of the attachment.
- 2. Before proceeding to step 3, describe the document using the Category List, the Description box, or both.

 Always fill in the description box
- 3. Click the [Add to List] button. ECF adds the selected document as an attachment. After adding all of the attachments / exhibits click on the [Next] button.

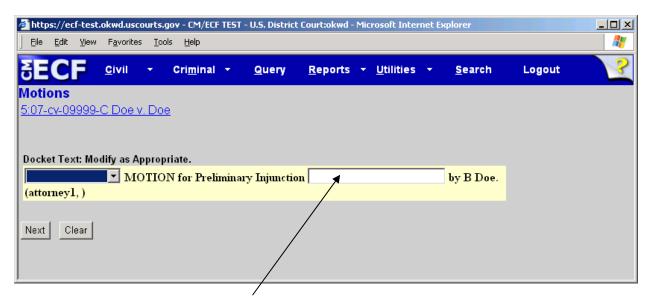


When Attachments And Exhibits Cannot Be Filed Electronically

Documents, attachments or exhibits that cannot be filed electronically will need to be filed conventionally. Follow the procedures outlined in our Policies & Procedures Manual for 'Conventional Filings'.

6. Modify docket text

If you are presented with a 'Docket Text: Modify' screen, click on the down arrow to display a list of modifiers. Select a modifier if appropriate.

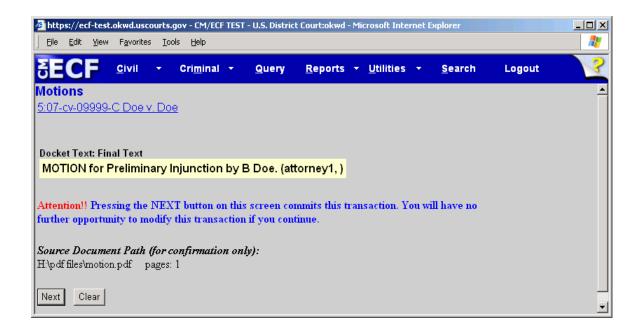


Click in the open text box to type additional words for further description of the pleading. Use lower case letters when adding text. This entry should closely resemble the 'title' on the document you are filing.

7. File the pleading

- Click on the [Next] button. A new Motions window appears displaying the complete entry. This is how the entry will appear on the docket sheet.
- Review the docket text. Make sure it reads correctly and there are no typographical
 errors. If you need to modify this filing in any way, click the [Back] button to find
 the screen you wish to alter.

****If you click the [Back] button at this point, there is a very good possibility that you will have to attach the document and any attachments / exhibits all over again.



Note: The screen shown above contains the following warning.

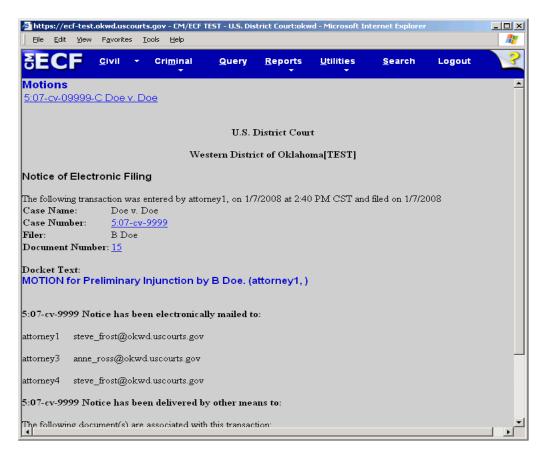
Pressing the NEXT button on this screen commits this transaction. You will have no further opportunity to modify this transaction if you continue.

Note: At any time prior to this step, you can reset ECF by clicking on any hyperlink on the blue ECF menu bar. ECF will reset to the beginning of the process you just selected.

- The full path and filename for any uploaded documents now appears on this screen as an added visual check to make sure the proper documents have been attached for the filing. This information will not appear in the docket entry.
- Click on the [Next] button to file the pleading.

7. Notice of Electronic Filing

Upon completion of the filing, the window below will be displayed. This is the Notice of Electronic Filing or the **NEF**. This is the official court file stamp.



This NEF provides confirmation that the pleading is now filed and is an official Court document. It displays the date and time of your transaction and the number that was assigned to your document.

Note: The **Notice of Electronic Filing** represents your Certificate of Service. We recommend that you retain a copy of this NEF for your files.

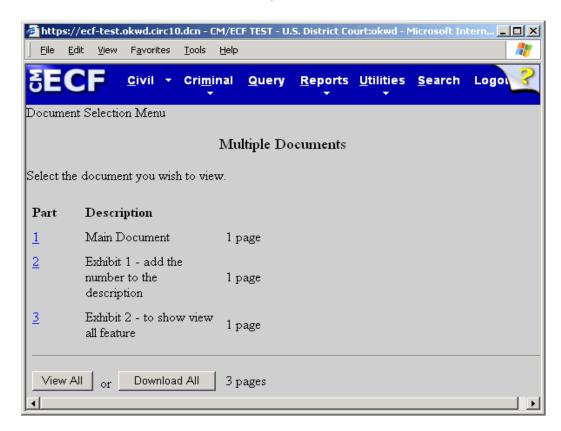
The ECF System will electronically transmit this **Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF)** to the attorneys in the case who are registered for ECF. This NEF also displays the names and addresses of individuals who will <u>not</u> be electronically notified of the filing. It is the <u>filer's</u> responsibility to serve copies of the pleading <u>and</u> the <u>Notice of Electronic Filing</u> (NEF) to attorneys and parties who are not set up for electronic notification.

E-Mail Notification of Documents That Were Filed

After a pleading is electronically filed, the ECF System sends the **Notice of Electronic Filing** to case participants who are registered for Electronic Case Filing. Individuals who receive this NEF via email are permitted one "free look" at the document by clicking on the associated hyper-linked document number.

To View Filings That Have Attachments or Exhibits

If attachments or exhibits accompany the document being filed, when you click on the 'document' link from the NEF, you will get the screen shown below. You can choose to view one document at a time, "View All" or "Download All".



To view one document at a time:

Click on the hyperlink $\underline{1}$ - Main Document. After viewing this filing use your browser **[Back]** button to return to the screen shown above. Then continue to click on each hyperlinked number to view each attachment /exhibit.

****If you close out of the screen shown above before viewing all the attachments /exhibits, you have closed your free look. The next time you click on the hyperlink to view this document you may be prompted to log into PACER.

Add/Create a New Party

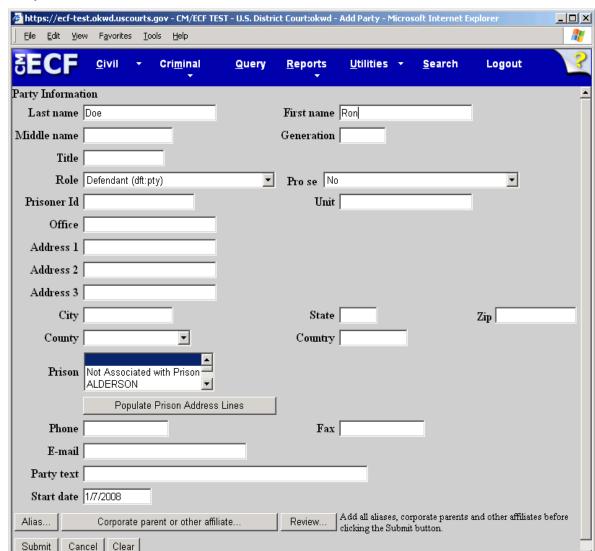
In rare cases you may need to add a party to the ECF System. The pleading you are filing should **support** the addition of the party(ies) to the case. If the party you represent is not listed on the 'Filer' screen, click on **Add/Create New Party**. The screen shown below will appear.



You must first perform a search to see if the party you are adding is already in the ECF System. In the "Last Name" field type the last name for an individual or the first few letters of a company name and then click on the [Search] button. You can narrow your search on a person by adding a first name initial.

- If a match <u>is</u> found, ECF will display a list of party names to choose from. If the name of the party you are adding appears on the list, mouse click on the name once and then click on the [Select name from list] button. Choose the appropriate "Role" and then click on the [Submit] button. Leave all other fields blank.
- If a match <u>is not</u> found click on the [Create new party] button. You will then get a screen where you can add the name into the system.





Party information screen show below.

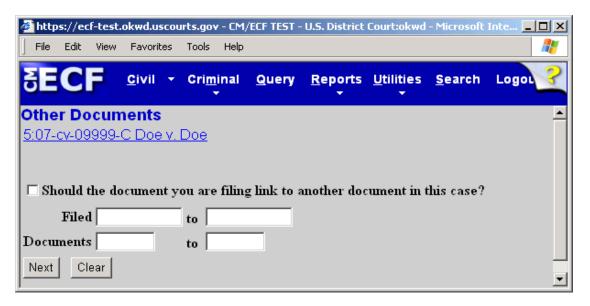
- For a company enter the entire company name in the "Last Name" field.
- For an individual enter the appropriate information into the "Last, First, Middle and Generation" fields.
- Select the appropriate party "Role" from the drop down list and then click [Submit].

LEAVE ALL OTHER FIELDS BLANK

Do not add address, phone, or email information on this screen

Linking Documents

Some pleadings such as Briefs and Responses should be "linked" to their related documents in the case. When filing these and certain other types of documents you will be presented with the screen similar to the one shown below. To link the document you are currently filing to a previously filed document click in the box in front of the words "Should the document you are filing link to another document in this case?", and click [Next].



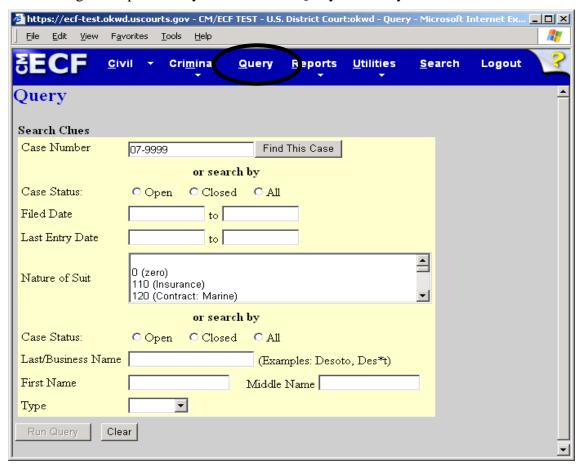
The next screen will show a list of all previously filed documents for the case. Click in the box in front of the document you want to link your filing to and then click [Next].



25

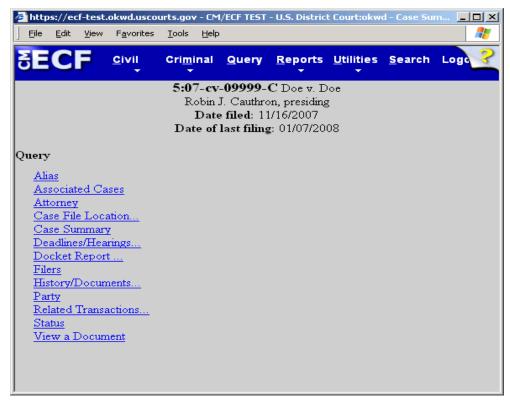
Query Feature

To research specific case information or to search our system for various types of information click on Query from the blue menu bar. Research for court data over the internet is fee based and you will incur PACER charges for this option. After you enter your PACER login and password you will see the Query data entry screen shown below.



If you know the case number, enter it in the **Case Number** field. Click [**Find This Case**] then click on the [**Run Query**] button. ECF opens the query screen shown on the next page. You can also run Queries by entering specific information into the Filed Date, Nature of Suit, Open or Closed cases, Party Name or Attorney Name fields from this screen.

At the top of the Query Screen Window, ECF displays the case number, case title, the judge assigned to the case and the date that the case was filed. Click on one of the hyperlinked choices from the Query options list to view case specific information.



Associated Cases

Displays any cases that have been <u>consolidated</u> with the case you are querying. This also shows any cases that are <u>related</u> to the case you are querying.

<u>Attorney</u>

Displays the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of the attorneys as well as the name of the party(ies) they represent in the case.

Case Summary

This provides a summary of current case-specific information. Date filed, nature of suit, cause of action code, parties and attorneys.

Deadlines/Hearings

This option allows you to query the pending or terminated deadlines or hearings for the case.

Docket Report (Docket Sheet)

When you select Docket Report, ECF opens a screen where you may select a date range for your docketing report or a range of docketing numbers. Leave the range fields blank to run an entire Docket Report.

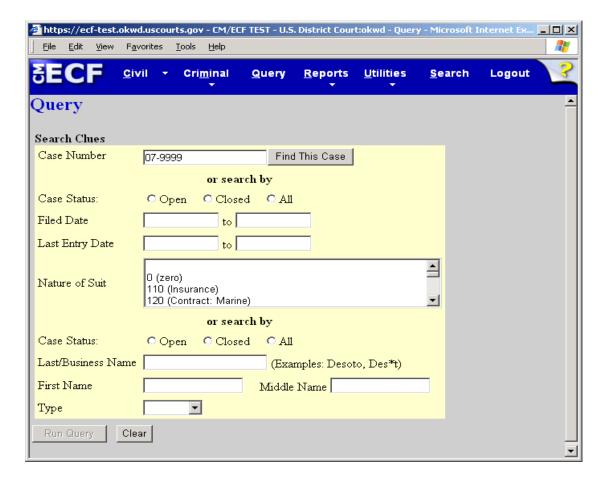
History/Documents

This selection runs a report showing the 'event history' and documents in a particular case. You may select the sort order for the report or choose to view all events or only those with documents attached. ECF also offers you the option to display the docket text in the report. After making your selections click on the [Run Query] button.

Other Queries

The process for selecting and running other queries is similar to what has been described above. You can Query the ECF database by entering specific information into the Filed Date, Nature of Suit, Open or Closed cases, Party Name or Attorney Name fields from this screen.

Enter the appropriate search criteria on the screen shown below and click [Run Query].



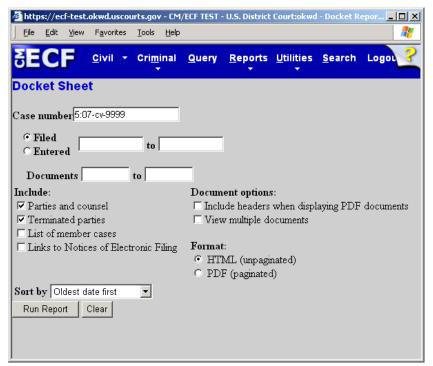
Reports Feature

The Reports feature of ECF provides the user with several report options. After selecting the Reports feature from the blue menu bar ECF opens the **Reports** screen shown below. Some of these reports are fee based and you will be prompted for your PACER login and password.



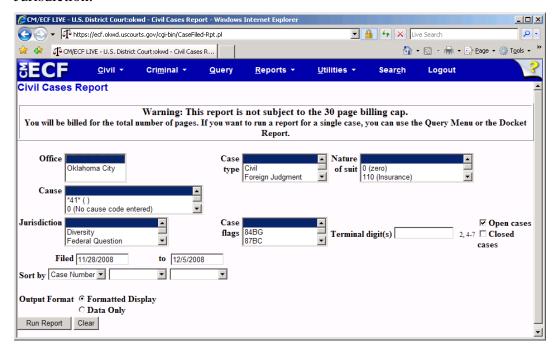
Docket Sheet (Docket Report)

Click on the <u>Docket Sheet</u> hyperlink and ECF opens the PACER login screen. Enter your PACER login and password then click on the [Login] button. You will be presented with the screen below. Enter the case number in the Case Number field and select any other necessary parameters using the other data fields and click [Run Report].



Civil Cases Report

The Civil Cases report allows you to query the database for cases filed within a specified date range. You can limit your search by entering a specific Nature of Suit, Cause Code, or Jurisdiction.



Utilities Feature



Maintain Your Login / Password

This option under the Utilities feature allows you to change your ECF Login and password.



To change your password, remove the asterisks, type a new password, and then click on the **[Submit]** button. You will then see the screen below indicating that the edit is complete. You may begin using the new password during your next ECF session.



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View Your Transaction Log

From the **Utilities** screen, click the <u>View your Transaction Log</u> hyperlink. ECF opens a Date Selection Criteria screen. Enter the date range for your report and click on the [**Run Report**] button. ECF displays a report showing all of your transactions in ECF within that date range.



Use this feature of ECF to review your transactions and to verify that:

- all of the transactions you entered are reflected on the Transaction Log
- no unauthorized individuals have entered transactions using your login and password

<u>Change Client Code, Change Your PACER Login, Review Billing History,</u> Show PACER Account, Remove Default PACER Account

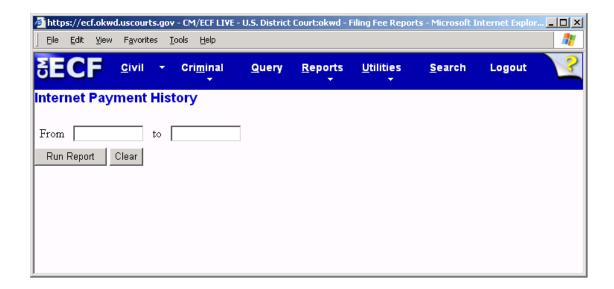
• these menu choices reference your PACER login and password. Contact PACER at 1-800-676-6856 for more information on these choices.

Miscellaneous

ECF provides four miscellaneous functions within the **Utilities** feature of the system.

- Internet Payment History
- Legal Research
- Mailings
- Verify a Document

Internet Payment History: this option can be used to verify your "Pay.gov" payment history. You can view your payment history for a specific date range.

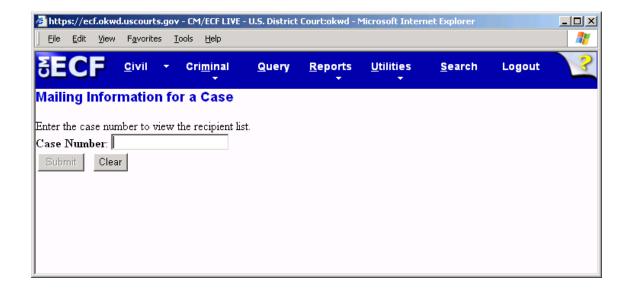


Legal Research: opens a screen that contains hyperlinks to a Law Dictionary, a Medical Dictionary, Westlaw via the Internet and LexisNexis.

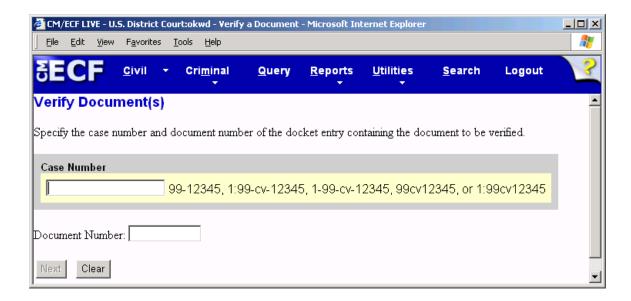
Mailings: opens a screen with links for "Mailing Info for a Case" and "Mailing Labels by Case".

Mailing Info for a Case: gives you information you may find helpful when completing a 'Certificate of Service'.

Mailing Labels by Case: allows you to generate mailing labels for a case.



Verify a Document: opens the query screen shown below. Enter the case number and document number to generate the electronic file stamp for that particular document. This is helpful if you forgot to retain a copy of the NEF for a document when you received it via E-Mail notification.



Logout

After you have completed all of your transactions for a particular session in ECF you should logout from the system.



Click on the <u>Logout</u> hyperlink from the ECF blue menu bar. ECF will log you out of the system and return you to the ECF login screen.